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ABSTRACT

To assist parents and their children in making a smooth transition when the children leave home to enter school, this handbook describes a series of school-related skills and activities. Eight brief sections compose the document, one intended for parents and seven focusing on children and reflecting common kindergarten experiences. The section for parents is designed to prepare mothers and fathers for the potentially unsettling task of seeing a child off to school. Subsequent sections of the guide list and briefly elaborate approximately 35 skills and abilities seen as being helpful for children to have acquired before entering school. Skills listed cover a range of behaviors, including basic school routines; communicative, cooperative, and exploratory behavior; and the ability to accept change and care for oneself. A concluding section provides forms for listing medical information, plus other records and references. (RH)

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Get a jump on Kindergarten



a handbook₂ for parents

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Get a jump on

Kindergarten

A.H. 'Susie' Frohman

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a handbook for parents

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Dear Parents,

Going to kindergarten is a challenging and sometimes emotional experience. It is a time of excitement and anticipation. Your child may look forward to going to school with the "big kids". Perhaps you are looking forward to the additional time you may have to do special things.

It is also a time for many questions.

Parents wonder if the teacher will:

- ▶ notice how sensitive their child is
- ▶ how hard he/she works for praise or a smile
- ▶ help if they have trouble buttoning their coat

Your children may wonder if:

- ▶ mom will do something interesting while they're not home
- ▶ the teacher will like them
- ▶ it will be fun riding on a school bus
- ▶ they can come home if they want to

This booklet presents a series of skills and activities to help you and your child make a smooth transition from home to school. It is divided into seven sections that reflect the many experiences of kindergarten and a special section for you.

The Authors

Getting ready:

Recognize that you will have mixed emotions about your child starting school.

- ▶ talk about it together or with a friend, determine the changes that it will cause
- ▶ plan to visit a good friend on that first day rather than staying home alone
- ▶ make all babysitting arrangements and bus drop off arrangements before the first week of school so that you are relaxed and confident at work or at home
- ▶ it's okay if children know you will miss them, however, try to focus on your positive feelings about forthcoming school experiences

Feel comfortable with your knowledge of and involvement with the school.

- ▶ ask other parents for information about the kindergarten program, school programs, and administration policy
- ▶ join groups or committees that interest you such as: P.T.A., Chapter I, Kindergarten Mother's Club, workshops and special activity clubs
- ▶ offer to be a room mother or volunteer in your child's classroom

Feel comfortable with your child's teacher.

- ▶ contact the teacher before school begins
- ▶ talk about your child's individual characteristics
- ▶ ask questions, find out what she expects of children in her class

Things to consider:

- ▶ you may need to adjust your children's sleep schedule a month or so prior to school if they usually stay up late and sleep in the morning
- ▶ breakfast is important to maintain high energy and interest in learning
- ▶ getting school items ready the night before will help assure a calm household in the morning
- ▶ "change" for lunch and milk will be needed on Mondays
- ▶ the home atmosphere may influence your child during the school day
- ▶ the family may need to allow additional time to get ready during the first week of school — until a family routine is established

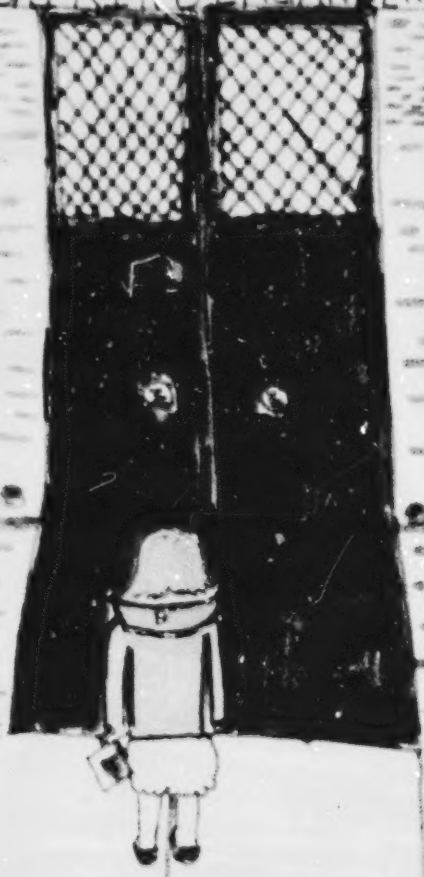


A child should not be frightened and alarmed about going to school. Sample concerns:

- ▶ will I walk or ride to school?
- ▶ can I come home if I don't like it?
- ▶ will I have to know numbers and _____ the first day?
- ▶ what will my teacher be like?

You and your child could visit the school before school starts. Talk about your child's concerns and fears and try to ease his/her anxiety. Walk or ride to school and back to show the route he/she will take. Introduce your child to the school crossing guard. Arrange for your child to play with children who are also going to the same school for the first time. Offer comfort, treat all concerns as important. Give experiences and information that help acceptance of school.

DAY KINDERGARTEN



Can open heavy doors in public buildings.

Take your child to the school, library,
post office, or courthouse and teach
how to open the doors.

Puts belongings (coat, mittens, boots, schoolbag) in place assigned.

Provide a special place (closet, behind the door, box in his/her room) for child to put coat, belongings. A cardboard box with the child's name would work fine.

Can recognize name or remember a symbol, color, or animal picture, used to label his/her special place or article of clothing.

Print the names of family members and teach your child to point to own name. Place stickers on the toy box and put child's name or matching stickers on clothes and other belongings.

Can hang coat on a hook or hanger.

Provide hook for coat. A large head nail will do. Use hooks in bedroom and closet. Have child hang towel on a hook in bathroom. Check the type of coat storage arrangement used in your school. Allow your child to practice if hangers are used.

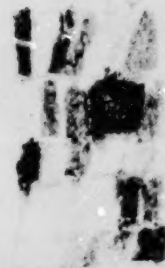
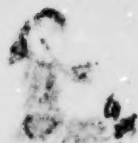


Can put on jacket, boots, hat and fasten as independently as possible.

Allow enough time for child to put on own clothes. Teach him/her to manage zippers and fasteners. Make sure boots are large enough. Difficult fasteners should be avoided. Try velcro or magnetic belt buckles, elastic waist pants, pullovers, and add a ring to coat zippers.

Can get on the bus, find a seat and feel comfortable during the bus ride.

Visit a bus at your school garage. Practice getting in and out and finding a seat. Introduce your child to the bus driver when off duty.



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Key phrases your child should know:

line up

go to the **end of the line**

go to the **front** of the line

stand **in back** of Jim

middle

girls line up behind Susie

all **boys** stand up

girls, get your coats **first**

sit down

sit in a **circle**

begin

stop

around

under

put a line **next** to

clean up

These phrases can be taught whenever you have a small group of children or family members at your house. If there is no "group" at your house, use toys, dolls, stuffed animals, etc. and have child place them in specified position. Or have her/him pretend the toys are doing the acting. Attend library hour, play groups or Sunday School where there may be an opportunity to follow these directions.



Can tell an adult if he/she:

is sick or hurt

didn't get something

didn't have a turn

needs help

doesn't understand activity

needs to use the bathroom

is allergic to some foods or should have
certain foods or activities

Set up situations so child can ask for help needed. If this is difficult, tell him what to say. Play games pretending the need to ask for help. If there are special medical needs, teach your child to tell that he/she can't have chocolate, milk, sugar, or whatever food or activity might be medically prohibited.

Will answer direct questions.

What is your name?



Makes a choice.

Do you want the yellow or green one?

Would you like mustard or ketchup?

Who wants to be first?

White milk or chocolate?

Do you want to spend your free time in
housekeeping or sandbox?



Answers yes or no.

Give your child an opportunity to answer questions from family members and unfamiliar persons. Encourage child to answer a clerk or nurse even if you have to whisper the response first. Practice make-believe situations that require an answer. Ask your child direct questions. If your culture permits, encourage your child to look at the person when speaking or being spoken to. Give opportunity for making the choice of foods or activity.



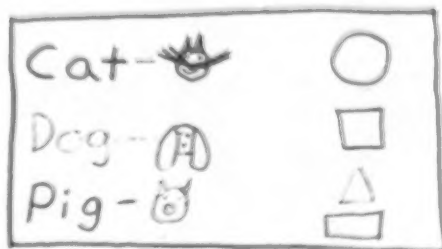
Follows 1, 2, or 3 step directions given to a group.

Take out your scissors.

Draw a red square and a green circle.

Get your scissors and a piece of paper.

Open your book, find the page with the dog on it and draw a line under all the b's.



Invite children over, give directions to the group. Tell family members at the dinner table to take plates to the sink. Ask family members to pick up dirty clothes and put them in the hamper. Encourage your child to "tune in" to group directions by praising him/her for following them.

Cook with friends and their children — give the children directions for the recipe. Use signal words and nonverbal directions such as:

"John, look"

"Mary, listen, watch me"

Shaking head "no"

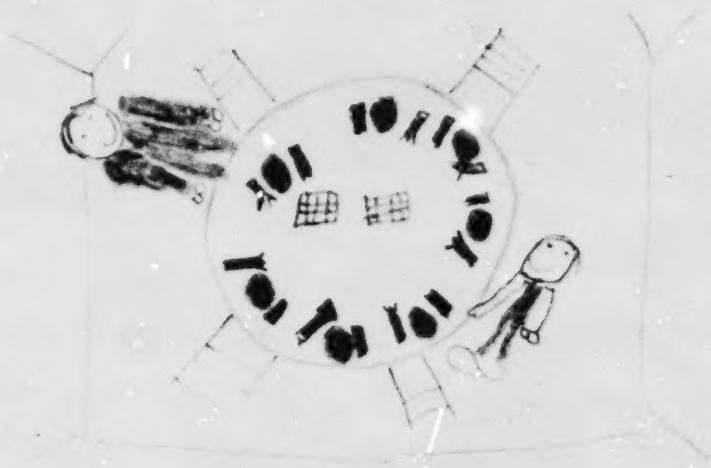
Curling finger for "come here"

Repeats simple stories and rhymes. Imitates simple visual games.

Sing songs, recite jingles and tongue twisters. Play games that require your child to copy your actions such as "Simon Says". Listen to records with directions in the songs such as "Hokey Pokey". After reading a story, ask simple questions about what happened. If he/she can't answer, go over the highlights of the story and give the answers.

Finishes task, job activity.

Give your child daily responsibilities such as feeding the dog, putting away toys and setting the table. Encourage "working". Be sure these tasks are simple and completed each day at a routine time. Give praise when tasks are done. Let your child hear you tell others about his/her good work. Use a sticker, star chart, happy face.



Responds to "no" expressed aloud or in signal form such as a head shake or hand signals by stopping activity.

- ▶ no, don't leave the room
- ▶ you must stay on the playground
- ▶ no, that is (hot - sharp - dangerous)
- ▶ don't take that, it's Mary's

Be consistent and follow through on commands of "no", "don't", "stop", etc.

If necessary:

1. Physically guide your child's body.
2. Give consequences and carry them out.
3. Take time to see that important commands are followed.

Remember: Do not give too many commands or commands that are too difficult.

Be sure you are not always saying "no" 28

1

Sits with group until activity is over.

Have child sit with the family at mealtime until excused. Read short story and have child sit with you until finished. Play group games. Take your child to movies, plays, concerts, playground activities, or swim class.



Can play independently for 10-15 minutes.

Have a special time during the day for looking at books or listening to records without adult attention. Encourage independence — provide only the help needed. Take your child to story hour or playtime groups where you leave and he/she stays.



Can wait:

- ▶ for teacher's attention
- ▶ his/her turn
- ▶ getting a drink
- ▶ telling his story
- ▶ getting materials
- ▶ in line

Practice waiting for dinner to be served, for mom to finish talking on phone, for his/her turn in a game. Discourage interruptions when you are talking to others.

Occasionally, while you are talking or doing a task, include your child by saying "Now, it's your turn."



Does not take things belonging to other people.

Have some places and things that your child cannot use — your purse, desk, drawer, medicine cabinet, book, specific areas in brother's or sister's rooms. Encourage respect for the ownership of others by showing respect for your child's ownership. Ask permission when using your child's things or areas.

Tries new foods, games, toys.

Serve and try new foods yourself. Make small samples of new foods. Play with your child allowing time to experiment with new games and toys. Demonstrate how to use the materials. Praise for trying new things.

Is accepting of praise and social recognition.

Talk about your child's talents and good behaviors to others in front of your child. Praise and reinforce often. State the behaviors you approve of, "You're hanging up your jacket, I like that". Do not just say "good boy", "bad boy".

Tries again after making mistakes.

Let your child know that you make mistakes too. Show how you "try, try again". Praise him/her for trying again. Help child to be successful by giving tasks that can be done easily and gradually increased in difficulty.

**Is comfortable in the care of other adults
when parents are gone.**

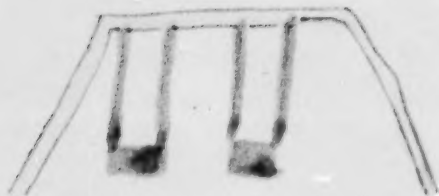
Plan to have your child stay at a friend's home without you, or attend nursery school, Head Start, Sunday School, etc.

Cooperates in group games and activities.

Provide opportunity for group games and activities. Start simply — playing game with one or two others. Gradually increase the number of people. Participate with your child until he/she is comfortable participating alone for increasingly longer periods with the play group.

Talks to or plays with other children.

Invite other children to your home. Seek out other families with children. Take your child to Sunday School, library hour, playgrounds, swimming class.



Plays safely among swings, merry-go-round, slides.

Visit the playground or park frequently — explain how to use equipment safely. Describe the hazards of walking in front of slides and near swings in motion. Use some of the equipment yourself. Talk to yourself (loudly enough so your child can hear) about what you need to be careful of as you use it.

Will stop activities when told and will participate in new activities although reluctant to stop previous task.

- ▶ several minutes before you want your child to stop say "In 5 minutes you will stop playing (or watching TV) and get ready to go to the store"
- ▶ praise your child when he/she stops as told
- ▶ follow through when you give directions to stop
- ▶ talk about what will happen during the day so your child can anticipate changes
- ▶ praise your child when he/she stops an activity and starts a new one as directed
- ▶ let your child know you understand that he/she doesn't want to stop. Tell child when he/she can again do the activity, "later, tomorrow, after lunch"
- ▶ when possible, ignore your child if he/she pouts or tantrums when required to stop an activity
- ▶ allow yourself sufficient time so you are not pressured when changing activities

Opens own milk carton.

Prior to school give your child a small carton of milk and show him/her how to open it. If ordering milk in a restaurant, tell the waitress not to open it and let your child do it. Let child open large 1/2 gallon and gallon carton with your guidance.

Eats what is his/hers, not someone elses.

Reinforce respect for other people's property including food, by modeling respect for child's food and materials and talking about rights of property (don't taste his/her ice cream without asking).

Wipes up own spills.

If your child spills, have him/her wipe it up. Help until she/he can wipe it up without help. Teach child how to wring out the cloth, squeeze a sponge or blot with paper.



Can use a public toilet (lock door, flush handle, seat, paper roll, urinal — for boys).

Use public restrooms at K-Mart, gas stations, school. Check bathrooms at school to see what facilities your child will need to use. Tell him/her to flush toilet after use.

Help to get right amount of paper. Show how to bend, rotate and reach. Initially, you may need to guide child's hand.

Pulls up underwear and pants.

Give child time and opportunities to practice. Show how to pull up underwear first and pants next.

Washes and dries own hands, turns faucets on and off, uses different soap and paper dispensers.

Give the opportunity to use different faucets and dispensers in public restrooms. Explain why it is necessary to wash hands after using the toilet.

Gets tissue or handkerchief and wipes nose when dripping.

Discourage "sniffing" and wiping on sleeve. Use cues: "wipe your nose", "use your handkerchief", "you need a tissue". Provide tissue or put a handkerchief in pocket when he/she has a cold.



Goes to the bathroom without asking if sick to his/her stomach or can't wait to use the toilet.

Tell your child to use the bathroom if he/she needs to vomit. Explain that this also should be done at school. Encourage your child to tell an adult when he/she feels sick, but to run to the bathroom or use the wastebasket if there isn't time.

Medical Information

Immunizations:

_____	date	_____	date
_____	date	_____	date
_____	date	_____	date
_____	date	_____	date
_____	date	_____	date

Things your child will need for kindergarten:

_____ paint shirt

_____ name in clothing

_____ mat, rug

_____ milk money

School Conferences

Questions and Comments:

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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